

BOUNDARIES OF ARUBA

Some interesting material,
but there should have been more
interpretation.



is your final grade
because your projects were
quite good.

Malcolm Slovin
Anthropology
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Boundaries are a classificatory system of division. The concept of boundaries does not only include boundaries of land division but also includes boundaries of human division. These human divisions are those which include the illegal or unrecognized church districts and boundaries of the city as opposed to the country. Other types of human divisions are those of political parties, and school districts. As all classification systems a boundary system is a political, social and economic convenience. This divided boundaries into three types; political boundaries, social boundaries, and economic boundaries. The term political boundaries is used in its broadest sense to take in all governmental activities. This includes government control and subsequent regulation of land boundaries, transfer of land holdings from the government to individuals, and government policies concerning land divisions. Social boundaries are those which include possession of land holdings, church districts, school districts, and possession of land within the family unit. Economic boundaries include divisions of rich and poor neighborhoods, and city and country boundary divisions. Another type of social boundary is that of fences. These are personalized boundary markers and are an important aspect of boundaries on Aruba. All three of these areas will be discussed together with most of the emphasis being placed on the history of Aruba in terms of its boundaries.

Aruba is an island in the Netherlands Antilles. It covers about 68 square miles and has a population of about 60,000. During the nineteenth century the Dutch government took over Aruba and all its land as the property of the Dutch government. The government soon saw that they would need to start farming on the island on a mass basis in order to give the people something of their own and at the same time feed the population. To do this they gave land to the farmers on a long lease policy. This long lease policy allowed a farmer to work the land for as long as it was kept intact and neither sold, rented nor divided. A land surveyor was sent out and he made measurements of approximately 100 meters by 100 meters. This is called one hectial of land. The measurement was then sent to the governor of the island for his approval. Upon his approval the farmer was given six months in which to mark his boundaries. The boundaries had to be fully marked. This meant that the farmer's land had to be fully enclosed with some type of fence. Some of these boundaries exist today but are not the same as the original boundaries measured. This is due to the fact that the farmers would make their boundaries according to the contour of the land (going around streams and boulders, while the official measurements were taken in squares. The person or farmer receiving the land was called a ⁿconcessioner and the land transaction was called a concession. This land concession was only when the farmer returned the land to the government. The concessioner had to pay a fee to the use of the land each year. This annual fee was usually about

one guilder.

During the early 1900's the Dutch government felt that they ought to give the people the possibility of owning a small piece of land for themselves. It was also a safety device for the people because land that they owned could not be taken away from them. A person who wanted to own land would get a permit for twenty square meters of land in only one particular place. This meant that the particular land place received could not be exchanged for another piece of land in another place nor could the boundaries be moved. This land could only be used for the building of a house and could not be used for any other purpose. All land boundaries were checked periodically by a land surveyor.

By 1927 the concessioners felt that the land they had been working could be considered their own and because of this the farmer now wanted the right to voting privileges. This caused a large increase in land concession requests. The argument was settled by an act which stated that those concessioners who had worked on the land for thirty years, now owned the land. This led to a difference in land types. The owned land was called a concession while the rented land was called leased land.

Before 1935 all land transactions were handled through the office of the Kadasterkantoor. This office was, and still is, the Dutch land survey office on Aruba. In 1935 the Dutch government gave all its land holdings to the new Antillian government. The land holdings of Aruba then came under the control of the Domeinbeheer. This is the Antillian government land survey office which now makes the actual land transactions.

The Dutch land survey office on *Aruba*, the *Kadasterkantoor*, serves only in an advisory capacity, draws up official *papers*, and helps make the district boundary divisions. In order to keep the land from being sold to individuals the Antillian government in 1947 passed a decree that land could only be sold to round off certain *properties*. This meant that if a farmer owned his own land and needed additional building room he applied for a permit to buy land and add to his owned land. He could not buy land which was separate or unattached to his own land. Land could be used by individuals in two ways. They could either rent land or lease land. When land is either rented or leased the boundaries of the land must be fenced. This means that all the land in Aruba should, by law, be fenced in. The exception to this law is the land belonging to the old concessions to which the law does not apply. There are distinctions between rented land and leased land. Rented land is rented to an individual or group of individuals for a period of five years. The renters have a personal right to use the land but cannot sell the land or anything on it without the permission of the government. Leased land is leased to individuals for a period of sixty years. It is a *legal* right to the land which means that within that sixty year period the owners can sell, mortgage and rent the land. In order to *get* this land the individuals must petition the government giving the purpose for which the land will be used, the location of the land desired and the size of the land desired. The petition is then processed and, if possible, the land is then allowed to be rented or leased. The survey offices of the Dutch

and Antillian governments then make *a survey letter of the* land including its measurements. There are also checks on these boundaries. There is an annual tax placed on the rented or leased land. At the time of tax collection a land surveyor is sent out to check the land boundaries against the official records. Any land found in excess is charged against the individual or individuals renting or leasing the land. This charge will take the form of either an additional tax or removal of boundaries from the excess land. Slight variations are permissible due to the contour of the land. Since the idea of excess land is relative, only the government can judge whether or not land is in excess of the original boundaries. Another form of boundary check takes place through aerial surveillance. Every few years the boundaries are checked so that the new districts of Aruba can be made up. This type of land boundary check is initiated by the legislative counsel or island counsel and carried out by the Kadasterkantoor.

In 1935, when the Dutch government gave up its land to the Antillian government, the Dutch land office, the Kadasterkantoor, had to give up its duties to the new Antillian land offices. The Antillian land office on Aruba is called the Domeinbeheer. The Kadasterkantoor still remains as a functional working unit of land management working with the Domeinbeheer. All official papers must be drawn up by the Kadasterkantoor. When land is either rented, leased or sold, the transaction is handled by the Domeinbeheer. The official record of the

land transaction is drawn up by the *Kadasterkantoor* and kept in the files of this Dutch agency. *The boundary divisions* of Aruba are made up by the Kadasterkantoor with the guidance of the Domeinbeheer. Since the Kadasterkantoor is the older agency it serves as a guideline and advisor for the Domeinbeheer.

Aruba is divided into four major districts according to population. It is used mainly as a governmental convenience for census of population and government work projects. The division is carried out by the Kadasterkantoor at the discretion of the island counsel. The major centers of San Nicolas and Oranjestadt are given their own divisions called Kom. Oranjestadt is further subdivided into, by the newest division, six subdivisions. The reason for this subdivision is the population density of the Oranjestadt area. At the time this information was gathered the new divisions were just being formed. For this reason the districts were unknown. Aruba is divided by boundary lines according to the towns. These town lines are clearly marked by the government and recognized by the people. The old system of this district boundary marking was done through the use of the letter-number system. A house in Wee Fontein, for example, would have the town letters, WF, followed by the house number. Each house in this district would contain the same WF marking with a different number. There are also district markings along the roads stating the district being entered or left. Even though the boundaries for the two large centers, or cities as they are called, are clearly marked, the people do not really accept them. Where San Nicolas or Oranjestadt begin or end is a matter of opinion. The system of letters and numbers used to locate a house is an old system

which is being changed. A new system is now being instituted through the office of the Domeinbeheer. This new system consists of the naming of streets. Each house will have a number and the address will consist of the house number and the name of the street it is located on.

Since every individual owning, renting or leasing land was or is required to have some sort of fencing around the property line, The types of fences and their use is an important aspect of boundaries. Aruba is divided into what is called the country and the city. The city takes in the immediate areas of Oranjestadt and San Nicolas. The country takes in the regions outside of these city areas. The fences used in the city are different from those used in the country. The people in the country use mainly stone for fences since it is both longlasting and durable. It is because of these two qualities that the stone fences are preferred. Due to the increasing scarcity of stones not everybody uses the stone fence. This scarcity is due to the increase in, and coming of, industry on Aruba. Government trucks are sent out each day to gather up the stones. The stones are then ground down and used for cements or in public work projects. The people, though, will take the stones from almost anyplace they can get it. An indication of this is seen in the disappearance of the Indian graves. There used to be many Indian grave sites on the island. These grave sites were marked with stone. The people have now rendered the grave sites unidentifiable by removing the stones to use in their fences. The people will

also go into the Canoco region of *Aruba* to find the stone as this is the only place where there is sufficient availability. Since most of the stone is found on government land a permit is needed in order to take the stone. The permit can be purchased for a fee of 50 Dutch cents from the office of the Domeinbeheer. In order to form a fence the stones are piled one on top of the other. Sometime there will be a reinforcement of wood or cactus to secure the piled rocks. These stone fences are called Tranquera or palisade fences. A second type of fence used extensively in the suburbs of Aruba is the Caducci fence. The Caducci fences are made of split cactus plants. The cactus is used because of its availability and its speed in growing. It also grows very thick which makes it a perfect material for fencing. The Caducci fence is said to be the old Aruban concept of freedom from their neighbors. In "old Aruba" the people kept themselves separated from each other. The "new" Aruban concept is said to be one of friendliness toward their neighbors. There are also a few country fences made of tree branches, but these are rare. The fences of the city area are different. The fences in the city area are made of stone brick or cement brick. These fences are made by people hired by the house owner. The fences in the city are built for mainly aesthetic reasons. The fences in the country, on the other hand, serve an entirely different purpose. The fences are used to keep the loose goats and sheep from wandering onto the property and eating up the plants. When a farmer owns goats or sheep the fences are used to keep the animals inside the property line. These animals are not allowed to roam free. Many animals, though, are seen to roam

freely and this is due to the poverty of the country people. They cannot afford to feed the animals and so allow them to roam free of the land to find food. Since this is against the law the animals are picked up by the police.

Another important boundary distinction is that of rich and poor neighborhoods. An indication of the wealth distribution is given by the types of fences used by the people. The country people are the poorest with many of them working at two jobs to support their families. The city region is the richest region with Oranjestadt being the major center of wealth on the island.

Another interesting boundary distinction is that of the school districts. Schools are not built in any specially designated district. They are built according to the age-population density of an area. If there is a high amount of young children in a highly populated area, an elementary school will be built in that area. As these children advance in age a new school will be built for the higher grades. This is the reason for schools being in a single concentrated area.

There are also illegal church boundaries. The heads of the churches make an illegal agreement that only the people of a certain area will attend a certain church. This is because of the fees paid to the churches for wedding and burial permits.

Land can also be divided up between the sons and/or daughters of a family. If the father dies the land is passed on and divided up between the mother, daughters and sons. Half of the land goes to the mother and the other half is divided equally between the mother, daughters and sons.

INFORMANTS

1. Reverend Van Dendoel
church at Lago colony
2. Mr. Pappes
Wec Fontein WF 162
3. J.W. Merryweather
office of Plantsoendienst
4. Milo
Oranjestadt
5. Mr. Selwyn Spanner
Oranjestadt
6. Engineer Dierkhout
office of Kadaasterkantoor
7. Ito Tromp
office of culture
8. head of office of Domeinbeheer